



DCI Interagency Balkan Task Force
10 April 1996

Possible Tampering With Mass Graves [REDACTED]

Sources [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] indicate that bodies from some mass grave sites--associated primarily with atrocities committed by the Bosnian Serbs--have been exhumed since the graves were first excavated. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] reports suggest that the Bosnian Serbs have deliberately damaged or attempted to disguise some mass grave sites, either at the time of burial or some time afterward. Such tampering with grave sites will complicate the already difficult task faced by international investigators of gathering physical evidence to prosecute war crimes cases and to identify remains and account for thousands of missing persons. [REDACTED]

The Difficulties of Detecting and Monitoring Mass Grave Sites

[REDACTED]

In addition, access to many known or suspected grave sites has long been denied to international observers and peacekeeping forces, precluding any possibility of getting on-site eyewitness reports, either at the time the grave was dug or when tampering occurred. Until very recently, officials from the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and international human rights organizations have had difficulty locating and gaining access to sites, primarily due to the lack of Bosnian Serb cooperation, but also to poor weather and vague reports on some mass grave locations. [REDACTED]

ICTY officials are aware of the potential for tampering and have requested IFOR assistance in guarding the sites, [REDACTED]. However, given the large number of known or suspected grave sites, IFOR has raised concerns that it does not have enough manpower to provide constant surveillance--a mission that is not specifically spelled out in its mandate. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Probable Exhumations

Probable exhumation of bodies from some mass grave sites has been identified [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] These sites, which are judged to be fairly significant in size and to contain a large number of bodies, may have been destroyed precisely because they were large enough to draw the attention of local citizens and international investigators. Although the sites below are the only ones to date where some evidence of possible tampering has been seen or reported, other sites—already known or as yet undiscovered—also may have been subjected to tampering. [REDACTED]

Tatar/Bratunac

[REDACTED] a mass grave site at Tatar/Bratunac in northeastern Bosnia probably was disturbed. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The site was suspected to contain 800 to 1,200 bodies of Muslim men killed after the fall of the Muslim enclave of Srebrenica on 11 July 1995 and hauled to Tatar. [REDACTED]

Branjevo/Donje Pilica

The Branjevo collective farm reportedly is the site where more than 1,000 Muslim men from Srebrenica were delivered from the Dutch UN compound at Potocari and executed in mid-July 1995. The site, which is 30 miles north of Srebrenica, near the village of Donje Pilica, was located [REDACTED] as a result of information from a press interview with a former Bosnian Serb soldier who claimed to have participated in killings there. [REDACTED]

Sahanici

[REDACTED] 3 April 1996 indicate that signs of tampering were seen at a mass grave site at Sahanici, which reportedly contained the remains of Muslims from Srebrenica killed in July 1995. [REDACTED]

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Other Sites Reportedly Show Signs of Tampering

In addition to reports of bodies being exhumed from mass graves, some information [REDACTED] indicates that the Bosnian Serbs may have deliberately damaged some sites in order to disguise them or destroy evidence. [REDACTED]

Lusci Palanka

A mass grave site in a cave at Lusci Palanka in western Bosnia was found by Bosnian Government investigators on 12 March. [REDACTED] Investigators believe the site contains the bodies of as many as 120 Muslims and Croats killed when Bosnian Serb authorities took control of the area in 1992. Moreover, [REDACTED] indicate that mass graves may be located in as many as 10 other caves in the area.

- The site at Lusci Palanka reportedly is badly damaged, [REDACTED]. The human remains reportedly were mixed in with animal bones and an apparent explosive was thrown into the cave to further damage or disguise the site. Similar actions may have been taken at other alleged burial sites in the area. [REDACTED]

Ljubija

Non-Serb miners in the town of Ljubija in northwestern Bosnia told Western and Balkan reporters early last January that the Bosnian Serbs were dumping the remains of Muslims killed during the war in mine pits around Ljubija. This information also was reported by refugees from the area.

- The bodies allegedly were being moved from mass grave locations in the region to mining sites where they were sometimes mangled by mining equipment or drenched in chemicals to prevent identification before being tossed into mine pits. Others reportedly were thrown into a shallow man-made lake in the mining area.
- The Bosnian Serbs effectively kept outsiders away from the area until January of this year, when British IFOR troops in the sector investigated some areas around the mine--including sending divers into the lake—but came up with no evidence.
- [REDACTED]

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Some Atrocities Appear to be Deliberately Concealed

[REDACTED] Bosnian Serb units also may have made some attempts to crudely dispose of bodies through incineration or mutilation at the outset rather than bury them. Similarly, attempts apparently were made to conceal the existence of grave sites at the time of burial rather than tampering with the sites later.

- [REDACTED] as many as 200 men from a Muslim resistance group were captured and executed by the Bosnian Serbs in the village of Grabovac in Bosnia. The men reportedly were buried in a mass grave near the village of Vecici and trees planted on top of the grave to disguise it.
- Another 63 men from the same Muslim resistance group were encircled and killed in the town of Vrbanjci and buried in a mass grave there. The bodies reportedly were exhumed later and taken to a factory in Kotor Varos where they were incinerated in the factory's furnace.
- A grave in the village of Krljevci, near Sanski Most in northwestern Bosnia, was found in January 1995 containing the bodies of 20 Bosnians who probably were killed in 1992. [REDACTED] The bodies appeared to have been charred beyond recognition prior to burial.
- [REDACTED] from Brcko in northeastern Bosnia [REDACTED] after Muslim civilians from the area were rounded up by the Bosnian Serbs and killed, their bodies were taken to the Stocni Hrani meat processing plant to be run through meat grinding equipment.
- The bodies of 30 civilian Bosnian Croats were found near the village of Kupres last fall. Most of the bodies had been mutilated before burial. [REDACTED]
- Numerous other reports [REDACTED] indicate that bodies have been dumped in caves, abandoned mines, garbage dumps, sinkholes, and lakes, suggesting that those responsible did not want the bodies to be found.
- Finally, some victims of atrocities reportedly were buried in legitimate graveyards in places such as Prijedor, Sarajevo, Zvornik, Brcko, and Brisevo, where fresh graves would not be noticed and where international investigators would be less likely to examine or exhume graves. [REDACTED]

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Exemptions: (b)(1), (b)(3)